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AGAWAM

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Town to play host to free COVID testing site

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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AGAWAM – Gov. Charlie Baker announced Monday afternoon the Town of Agawam will have a site that will have free COVID-19 testing for anyone in need of a test.

Unlike some other sites, testing is completely free of charge and an individual does not need to be experiencing any type of symptoms or other problems. It could simply be for peace of mind or because you have been exposed to someone with the virus, or possibly been with a large crowd recently.

Health Director Kathleen Auer confirmed she was spending this week working with Tapestry Health, which will be administering the testing site in town.

Details emerged Tuesday for the Agawam testing site.

On Wednesday, Aug. 5, individuals can come to Agawam Junior High School, located at 1305 Springfield St. Testing will be held between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. While there are walk-ins allowed, making an appointment is preferred in order to control traffic coming through the site. To call Tapestry and arrange an appointment, the number is (413) 364-2149.

There will also be testing on Thursday, Aug. 6 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts website, additional hours will be added, but they have not been announced as of press time.

The website states the free testing will be available through at least Aug. 14 with the possibility it will be extended.

The website said the testing “open to everyone.” It will be pro-

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The health department has been regularly monitoring places like the Main Street Deli as it adjusts to having outdoor seating. PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Health director adjusts to increased role during pandemic

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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AGAWAM – In any town or city, the job of the Health Director can often go overlooked outside of the occasional time when a structure needs to be condemned or a business needs to be shut down.

But since the COVID-19 pandemic, health directors across the country are in the limelight, taking instruction and guidance from the state, and being responsible for helping to keep communities safe.

In Agawam, Health Director Kathleen Auer and her staff have been extremely busy since the

pandemic was declared in March.

Auer said she is pleased with how Agawam has responded to the pandemic and is happy with the people for following guidelines and orders.

“I am extremely proud of the people of Agawam and Massachusetts for the amazing and car-

PANDEMIC | page 5

Back in action



An Agawam baseball player fields a ground ball during junior league game at Monson Sunday afternoon. High school-age baseball is being played this summer with Agawam entering junior and senior teams. PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Scouts remain active with bottle drive

By Shelby Macri
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AGAWAM – The Agawam Boy Scout Troop 82 held a can and bottle drive on Saturday July 18, this drive helped to raise funds for the troop. Troop Committee Chair Joe Longo expressed that the money raised by this drive can certainly help them pay for camping trips for next year. As they are not doing camp trips this year, due to COVID-19 and the restrictions that come with it.

Due to these restrictions, the troop was unable to do their annual candy bar sale, as that is typically the way the troop raises money for these funds. Along

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Troop 82 held a bottle and can drive on Saturday July 18, where they received many donations to help them with troop funds. PHOTO BY SHELBY MACRI



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ARREST LOG

The Agawam Police Department responded to 456 calls for service from July 20 to July 26 and recorded the following arrests. No arrests in the public log have been omitted. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty.

Monday, July 20

Marcelino Ramos, 47, of 292 Union St., Springfield, was arrested at 5:05 a.m. for with attaching plates, and operating with a suspended license.

Thursday, July 23

Ronald J. Cooper, 23, of 134 Hampstead Road, Derry, NH, was arrested 1:15 p.m. for being a fugitive from justice on a court warrant.

Friday, July 24

Frederick Dixon, 53, of 45 Nevada St., Springfield, was arrested at 6:04 p.m. for assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.

More funding approved for projects along CT River

REGION – With \$1.5 million in funding for the Connecticut River Clean-up Committee, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is supporting critical work to eliminate combined sewer overflows.

Monies will be directed to several projects this year in Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke to further reduce the amount of untreated sewage that annually spills into the Connecticut River during rainstorms.

This is the sixth straight year of funding from the Commonwealth for CSO work in the region, all of which has come from authorizations within the State’s Environmental Bond Bills.

“Holyoke is committed to continuously enhancing our environmental stewardship, and we are grateful to MassDEP and the legislature for funding these critical projects,” said Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse.

“Communities such as ours are under great financial strain due to the coronavirus pandemic and we are grateful to the CRCC for their continued support,” Mayor John L. Vieau. “This funding will allow us to continue to meet federal and state requirements and protect our shared natural resources, without the added burden to our City’s lean budget.”

“I want to thank the CRCC for their continued leadership advocating for our beloved riverfront and local community infrastructure needs, and to Governor Baker and his administration for their unyielding efforts supporting our Western Massachusetts communities that abut our beautiful Connecticut River,” Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno stated. “The PVPC does a tremendous job in bringing all local and state stakeholders together so that projects like these are successful.”

“In these challenging times we are especially appreciative of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection’s continued support for the communities of Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke under our collective Connecticut River Clean-up Committee effort,”



The Connecticut River at Pynchon Point in Agawam. The state recently approved more funding for the riverside. SUBMITTED PHOTO

observed PVPC Executive Director Kimberly H. Robinson. “This funding helps shift the burden of fixing this legacy infrastructure away from some of our most financially strained communities while continuing to improve the Connecticut River water quality standards at a time when COVID-19 is clearly demonstrating the need for safe and healthy outdoor recreation opportunities for all of our Valley’s residents.”

The Connecticut River Clean Up Committee

(CRCC) is a regional collaborative convened and staffed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission since 1993 that has brought together communities in addressing combined sewer infrastructure issues. The Committee now includes the Cities of Chicopee and Holyoke, the Springfield Water & Sewer Commission (SWSC), and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

Agawam State Senator Velis named to Holyoke Soldiers’ Home Oversight Committee

HOLYOKE – Senator John Velis, who represents Agawam in the State Senate, was appointed this week to a Special Joint Oversight Committee that is tasked with making recommendations for changes at the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home.

The committee will be investigating the deadly outbreak of COVID-19 that took place at the facility, and will make recommendations on infrastructure and administrative changes. This work will involve looking at all aspects of the facility, from the actual building, to the organizational structure, to staffing levels and medical care, and will have a major impact on what the facility will look like for years to come.

When asked about his goals for the committee, Senator Velis emphasized how important it will be for the new Home to meet the evolving needs of the growing veteran population in Massa-

chusetts.

“We need to think about both the immediate and long-term needs of the facility. During this work, it is going to be absolutely critical that we take into account the next generation of veterans that will be depending on the Home, of which the fastest growing group is women.” Said Velis. “Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars will rely on the Home for years to come, and it is imperative that their specific needs are addressed so that the Home can be sustainable.”

The committee will not be the first time that Velis has advocated for increased support for the Soldiers’ Home. In early July, Velis secured a \$250,000 earmark for the facility in the Senate’s COVID-19 Supplemental Budget, which will help with infection control efforts. In addition, the Senator held a listening session in Westfield last Friday with

some of the families of veterans who passed away at the home, and says he will continue holding sessions as the committee begins work.

“We need to do everything in our power to make sure that what happened at the Home, will never happen again,” said Velis. “I think it’s extremely important that we continue to hear from those families that were directly affected, in order to inform our work and address every issue they had to go through.”

Joining Senator Velis on the joint-committee from the Western Massachusetts delegation will be Sen. James Welch (D-West Springfield), Rep. Aaron Vega (D-Holyoke), Rep. Joe Wagner (D-Chicopee), Rep. Michael Finn (D-West Springfield), and Rep. Mindy Domb (D-Amherst).

A report and any draft legislation from the committee are due by March, 31, 2021.



Agawam State Senator John Velis

Baker announces \$20M to support vital social services, small businesses

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration recently announced \$19.6 million for municipalities to address emergency needs in light of the coronavirus pandemic. This funding will support 181 communities in their work to provide vital services to low-income residents and small businesses affected by the recent outbreak.

Local governments and regional consortiums will fund social services, including homelessness prevention, food pantries and assistance, and job training for in-demand health care workers and technicians. Many communities will also make grants available for local small businesses with five or less employees. A total of 36 lead awardees will organize within their respective municipality or region to deliver services.

The Department of Housing and Community Development made the \$19.6 million award through the federally funded Community Development Block Grant program. Congress allocated new emergency funding for the

program through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act – the CARES Act – to address substantial needs in low and moderate-income communities affected by the pandemic. DHCD has received \$46 million in special CDBG funds so far and is distributing funding across municipalities and stakeholders to meet increased needs, with a focus on helping households maintain housing stability.

In June, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a \$20 million Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance program, which is also funded in part through this federal allocation. This new fund will help more low-income households who have lost employment or income due to the pandemic maintain stable housing, and builds on DHCD’s existing homelessness prevention program, RAFT. In March, Governor Baker announced a \$5 million infusion for the fund to address increased need.

DHCD has received more than \$160 million in federal funding through the

CARES Act, including more than \$20 million that has been distributed to Community Action Agencies for anti-poverty work, and is preparing to allocate additional funding for shelter providers. DHCD continues to be in close contact with the stakeholder network, and is working with CHAPA and Mass Housing Partnership to track local emergency rental assistance programs and other resources available to those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This month, the Baker-Polito Administration unveiled a COVID-19 economic recovery package to respond to challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The \$275 million package, designed to promote equity across the commonwealth, includes \$85 million for housing efforts, including investments in neighborhood stabilization and sustainable, climate resilient affordable housing, as well as \$50 million in targeted relief for small and minority-owned businesses.

Career coach to discuss transitioning in uncertainty

WILBRAHAM – Those considering a change in career are invited to participate in a remote workshop with a certified career coach through the Wilbraham Public Library next month.

Led by Anne Crawford, the workshop will take place Wednesday, Aug. 5 at 6 p.m. Crawford will help engage participants to talk about their career objectives, set goals and how to foster a sense of control while looking for a new job. She will discuss how to understand and manage stress as well as how to open doors to other options, moving the employment process forward.

Registration is required and may be completed online at wilbrahamlibrary.org or by calling 596-6141.

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THIS NEWSPAPER

Rep. Boldyga opposes policing reform bill, saying it goes too far

BOSTON – State Representative Nicholas Boldyga (R-Southwick) today opposed a sweeping policing reform bill, saying, “I know first-hand what police officers go through on a daily basis, this bill goes too far and could ultimately compromise public safety by deterring qualified candidates from pursuing a law enforcement career and prompting other seasoned veterans to leave the profession”.

House Bill 4860, An Act relative to justice, equity and accountability in law enforcement in the Commonwealth, was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 93-66 on July 24. The bill’s passage comes just 10 days after the Senate approved its own version of the bill (Senate Bill 2820).

The Senate has been criticized for not holding a hearing to solicit public input before passing its policing reform bill, and for not providing police with a seat at the table. Although the House accepted written testimony on Senate Bill 2820 over a two-day period, Representative Boldyga said this still provided little time to fully vet the many provisions contained in the 89-page bill, and noted that the House version – which is even longer at 93 pages – was not made publicly available until 48 hours before the House began its debate.

The actions taken by the House and Senate were prompted in large part by the national protests that followed the murder

of George Floyd by police officers in Minnesota on May 25. Condemning Floyd’s murder and acknowledging the need to address systemic racism throughout society, Representative Boldyga said he supports implementing reforms to help ensure that similar incidents do not happen in Massachusetts, but voted against the bill due to concerns over other provisions that could have long-term implications for law enforcement and potentially make an already hazardous job even more dangerous. Representative Boldyga said there was strong consensus among his colleagues for passing sections of the bill that address many of the core policing reforms endorsed by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus. These reforms include establishing a statewide licensing and certification process for all law enforcement officers, implementing a ban on the use of chokeholds, and requiring officers to intervene if they witness police misconduct, all of which he supports.

But Representative Boldyga also expressed concerns about other provisions contained in the bill that would make it harder for police officers to do their jobs, including restrictions on the use of no-knock warrants and limits on the ability of law enforcement to be notified by schools of potential problems, including students suspected of being affiliated with gangs. Limiting the use of no-knock warrants, he said, would expose more police officers to

potentially life-threatening situations if the individual they are serving the warrant on is armed, while restricting the information reported by schools to law enforcement could result in many potentially volatile situations being allowed to escalate beyond control when earlier intervention could have prevented this from happening.

One of the major points of contention in both bills involves the use of qualified immunity, which protects police officers and other public officials from the threat of civil liability. Although the House takes a less drastic approach than the Senate on this issue, Representative Boldyga said there is still a great deal of confusion around qualified immunity, and expressed concerns about making changes to the law without fully understanding the potential implications and unintended consequences that could result from changing the law.

Prior to the bill’s passage, the House adopted an amendment calling for the establishment of a special commission to study qualified immunity and report back to the Legislature by March 31, 2021, but left the bill’s underlying language related to qualified immunity untouched. An attempt to further amend this proposal by delaying the implementation of any qualified immunity changes until the commission reports its findings was narrowly defeated on a vote of 72-87.

During floor debate on House Bill 4860,

Representative Boldyga co-sponsored and supported several amendments seeking to address members’ concerns and improve the bill that failed to pass, including proposals:

- establishing a clear definition of what constitutes unprofessional police conduct, to include excessive use of physical force or repeated and sustained instances of behavior that violates departmental policies;
- protecting police officers from anonymous complaints by requiring that complaints submitted to the Division of Police Standards be from an identifiable complainant and signed under the pains and penalties of perjury;
- mandating that prior disciplinary actions resolved or adjudicated before the effective date of the bill not be considered sufficient on their own to deny an officer recertification, but may be used if the officer becomes the subject of further discipline after the effective date;
- eliminating language that prohibits school officials from sharing information on students who may be involved in gang activity with outside law enforcement agencies; and
- removing restrictive language that prevents individuals with prior law enforcement experience from serving on the new Massachusetts Police Standards and Training Commission.

The House and Senate will now appoint a conference committee that will attempt to reconcile the differences between the two bills.

Agawam Rotary/Parish Cupboard announces food drive

AGAWAM/WEST SPRINGFIELD – The Parish Cupboard needs our help. During this difficult time, families need the help of the Parish Cupboard more than ever! In turn, the Parish Cupboard needs our help more than ever.

The Agawam Rotary Club is promoting two easy no-contact ways to donate:

1. The Parish Cupboard van will be parked at the with the back door open. You can just drop your donation inside.
430 Main Street shops
Monday, August 3, 2020 - Friday August 7, 2020 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
2. You can mail a check directly to the Parish Cupboard at 1023 Main Street
West Springfield, MA 01089. They will use it to purchase what they need.

Some suggested food items include:
Pasta
Boxed meals, such as Hamburger Helper
Cereal
Canned fruit
Canned meat, such as Chef Boyardee
Condiments, like mustard, ketchup

The Parish Cupboard is providing lunches to go and groceries for families in need Monday through Friday.

The Agawam Rotary Club is proud to support and help the Parish Cupboard.



Springfield Technical Community College was the latest school to delay the start of fall sports. SUBMITTED PHOTO

STCC delays start of soccer, basketball, wrestling seasons

SPRINGFIELD – Following an announcement from the NJCAA, Springfield Technical Community College will delay the start of the soccer, basketball and wrestling seasons until after Jan. 1.

The National Junior College Athletic Association, which governs community college athletics, announced the majority of competition will be moved to the spring semester. The NJCAA stated in a plan of action that close-contact sports should not be held in the fall to keep student-athletes and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

STCC Athletic Director Jenkin Gould said he is happy with the NJCAA’s decision.

“While spring soccer is unusual so is our current situation,” Gould said. “This offers a better chance for our student-athletes to participate in a championship season, one that might have been greatly restricted by concerns surrounding COVID-19. This decision allows for the entire association to move forward as one and support all its student-athletes.”

STCC belongs to the National Collegiate Wrestling Association (NCWA), which as of July 23 had not made a final statement on the fall season. While STCC wrestling is not affiliated with the NJCAA, the college will follow its plan and delay competitive wrestling after Jan. 1.

STCC Vice President of Student Affairs Darcey Kemp said athletics at STCC build character and help instill values of discipline, sportsmanship and work ethic.

“We’re proud of our student-athletes and recognize the hard work and dedication of the staff who coach them,” Kemp said. “Safety is a top priority, and we applaud the NJCAA on their plan to delay the start times for close-contact sports during these challenging times.”

According to a statement from the NJCAA, all winter sports competition will begin in January with a majority of championship seasons moved from March to April. Close contact fall sports will be held in the spring. STCC’s men’s and women’s soccer teams will kick off their seasons in March.

Rick’s Place to offer free grief support

WILBRAHAM – Children and families who have experienced the loss of a loved one are invited to participate in virtual peer groups to take place in late August, facilitated by the nonprofit Rick’s Place. The peer groups are designed for children, teens and their caregivers.

Rick’s Place, named for Rick Thorpe, a Wilbraham native and Minnechaug Regional High School graduate who died in the Tower Two collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11, offers peer-supported bereavement services for children who have experienced death. For more information or to schedule a virtual intake meeting, visit ricksplacema.org or call 413-279-2010.

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Opinion

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Questions about working while collecting benefits

By Russell Gloor
Guest columnist

Dear Rusty: In 2019 I was out of work for an extended period. I was eligible to begin receiving retirement benefits (at age 63) and started to do so in August. My part-time job was limited so it did not conflict with my Social Security amount, but in October through the end of 2019 I went back to my old industry at four times the pay rate. My understanding is that I will need to pay Social Security back about \$1.40 for every benefit dollar they have paid me while I worked at the higher wage. When and how is that paid? Signed: Part Time Again

Dear Part Time Again: If you started your Social Security benefits in August of last year at age 63, for the remainder of 2019 you were subject to the "first year rule" which means you had a monthly earnings limit of \$1,470 after your benefit started. If you exceeded that monthly limit starting in October of 2019 and for the rest of the year, you won't be entitled to benefits for the months of October, November and December. Social Security will consider that an overpayment, and they will want you to repay all those benefits to them. However, if it would be to your advantage to do so, you can request that Social Security use the annual earnings limit for 2019, instead of the monthly limit. For example, if using the 2019 annual earnings limit (\$17,640) would result in a smaller impact to your benefits, Social Security may accommodate your request to use the annual limit. Depending upon your total earnings in 2019, you may want to consider asking that the annual earnings limit be used, instead of the monthly limit, when determining your 2019 impact for exceeding the earnings limit.

Starting in 2020 you'll be subject to an annual limit of \$18,240 (limit changes yearly). If you exceed the annual limit, SS will take back benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. If you've again stopped working at the higher amount, and now only working part-time and won't earn more than \$18,240 for this year, you'll not be subject to the annual limit. But exceeding the 2019 monthly limit last year will still affect you.

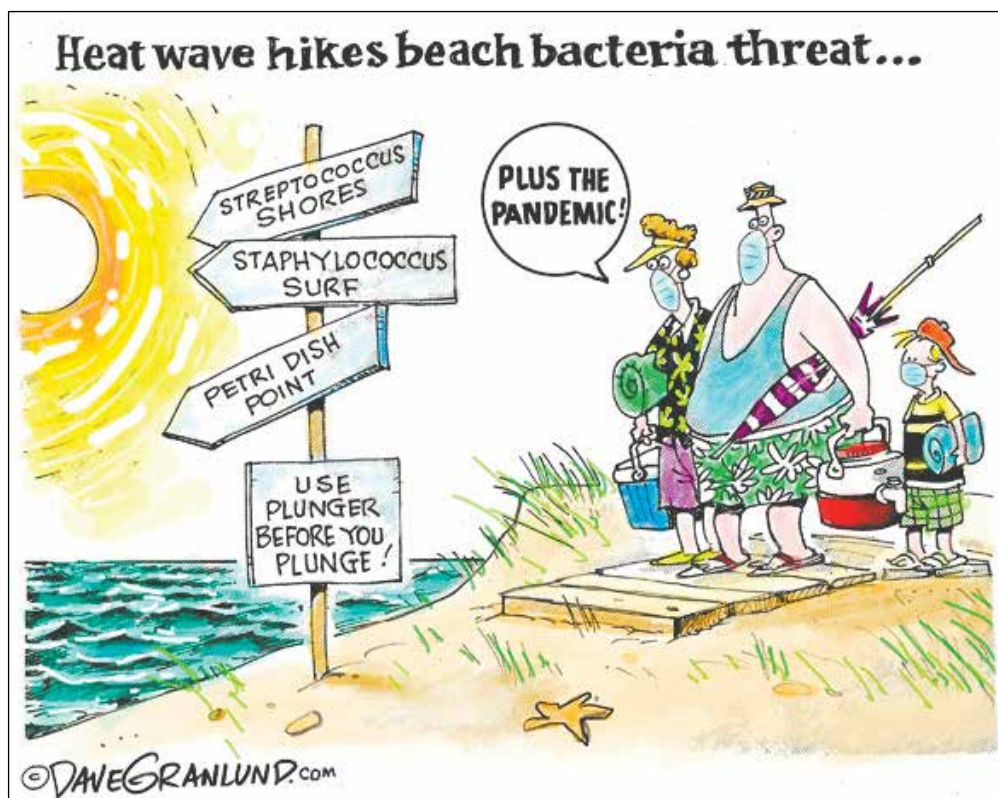
You will receive a form from Social Security asking you to specify your 2019 income month by month for the months you were receiving benefits. Since you exceeded the monthly limit from October through December, they'll be asking you to repay all of the benefits you received for those months. They will give you the option of either repaying them in full in a lump sum, or they will recover what you owe by withholding your monthly benefits until the overpayment is satisfied. That will mean you'll go some months without benefits, the number of months dependent upon your monthly benefit amount and how much you owe them. Remember, you have the option to request the annual limit if it will benefit you.

Though you'll lose benefits for some number of months now, when you reach your full retirement age (66 years and 4 months) they will automatically give you time credit for the number of months they withheld benefits and move your SS claim date forward. That will increase your monthly benefit amount slightly, and you'll get that slightly higher benefit for the rest of your life.

One final point: In the year you reach your full retirement age the annual earnings limit will go up by about 2.5 times and the penalty for exceeding it will be less (\$1 for every \$3 over the limit). And when you reach your full retirement age the earnings limit goes away entirely.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadviser@amacfoundation.org.

Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor.



Cleome, a welcome volunteer

Recently, I was weeding an area of my yard that had been a fern garden. I never had such a distaste for ferns until I tried to eradicate them, mat-like roots and all. I vowed henceforth that every new sprout would be removed immediately and within a month of my initial labor, I found myself back in the same garden, yanking up all the baby ferns, crabgrass, purslane and the like. To my surprise, however, there was a friend among the foes! A cleome, sometimes known as spider flower, had seeded itself. Had the seed lay dormant for years only to be exposed to the light now that the ferns were gone? One is never certain how volunteers make their way to the landscape.

Cleome was one of the flowers that my mother and I planted in the annual border along the foundation of our house; for that reason it holds a special place in my heart. As a child, I was drawn to the seed pods of this peculiar plant; if you waited until they were "just right" and gave them a squeeze, the seeds would fly everywhere. What fun! This attribute gives the plant tremendous "staying power" in the garden. In other words, it pops up everywhere the following season (and maybe seasons later?). This can be a very good thing if you enjoy having the cleome around as much as I do.

Spider flower goes by the scientific name *Cleome hasslerana*. Older cultivars such as 'Helen Campbell' and the 'Queen' series top off at an airy four or five feet tall, while the newer 'Sparkler' hybrids are a bit shorter and bushier. Besides white, spider flower comes in pink, cherry and lavender. It was given such a unique name because of the flower's long, slender stamens that remind one of spider legs protruding from the plant. The stamens hold the eventual seed pods a distance away giving them even more "popping power."

Because cleomes are flower producing power-houses, they sometimes become exhausted by midsummer; their lower leaves yellow and flowers start to fade. I always thought that if they were dead-headed like other, more common annuals were, maybe they would last longer into the season. So, as an experiment I clipped the seed-pods close to the plant as soon as they began to form. Unfortunately the overall form of the plant was altered, not for the better, and with little reward for my work. Then I began to search out what exactly cleomes need in order to thrive with the idea if perhaps I met those requirements I'd have better luck.

I had always known that cleomes prefer full sun and well-drained soil. What I didn't know was that they also like fertile soil and space away from one another. In other words, three per 18" container will not work and regular doses of liquid feed are a must.

In the north, the cleome's habit of self-sowing doesn't become annoying, but in warmer areas it can become weedy. Clipping the seed-pods as mentioned above would "nip this problem in the bud." Seedlings that develop from volunteers will likely be a blend color-wise of the plants you grew last year because they are cross-pollinated by insects. Only time will tell what color my cleome flower will be. I can't wait to see it and have it drop all of its wonderful seeds just in time for next year's garden.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekennedy@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

IN THE GARDEN



Roberta McQuaid

YESTERDAY'S HOMETOWN NEWS

Into the Woods

By Sadie Parrotta
Guest Columnist

Sometimes, there's a certain magic in feeling small. My friends and I are sitting outside of a country store in Vermont, munching on meatball subs and turkey clubs as we pool our brain powers together to tackle a sudoku puzzle in the Green Mountain Daily. We're three dots in the valley beneath a mountain range that resembles a crashing wave of green. Evergreen. Cool blue-green, almost black. Warm, light green, like the tiny blades of grass beneath our picnic table. The high-noon sunlight excellently highlights this freckling pattern. It's windy, but the trees, like towers and well-built bridges, do not quiver.

It occurs to me that, for some living things, the world ends in those woods. I look up from the valley at the mountain range. I have the imagination to create paths in my head, and

shimmering white creeks, patches of Jacob's ladder and birds nests, but the moose that live in the Green Mountains cannot imagine my world. All the moose in Vermont know is the dirt beneath their hooves, where to find their food, and safe places to sleep at night. Simple. I wonder if it's a privilege to be enlightened, or if ignorance truly is bliss. I'm inclined towards the former: I like being challenged.

I've been spending a lot of time in the woods since the world came grinding to a halt. I've camped up in New Hampshire and Vermont with my friends a couple of times now. Camping is fun even if you're bad at it, which my friends and I are. During that same camping trip in Vermont, we went to the grocery store in the evening to buy ingredients for a campfire-cooked Shepherd's Pie. On the drive back, we saw a rosy red sunset disappear behind gray storm clouds. We got lost in the dark woods, and by the time

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PANDEMIC
from page 1

ing work the citizens have accomplished by following the latest requirements,” said Auer. “Our numbers have dropped dramatically. That being said we cannot let our guard down as the virus is still out there. The summer vacation season poses new challenges as visitors arrive from other states or our residents return. It is imperative that people follow the travel order issued on July 24.”

Auer’s role has come to the forefront, and her days not only include the routine work, but keeping an eye on food establishments that are adjusting to new guidelines, and helping with testing.

She said Building Inspector Michael Theroux has been out with her responding to various issues. She also said the mayor and law department have been involved and supportive.

“Literally, every Department Head had to completely retool the way business is done,” said Auer. “I speak with many of them every day as they develop their re-opening plan including the School Superintendent. I am also fortunate that the Board of Health in Agawam consists of three experienced medical professionals: Gladys Fernandez-Largay MD., Mary Jo Safford, PA and Mary Lee Bertrand, RN.”



Partners Restaurant was one of the first restaurants that participated in outdoor dining once it was allowed. PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Murphy's Pub is another location that is adjusting to different regulations for food service.

One of the biggest initiatives for the town has been monitoring outdoor dining. Outdoor dining was a big part of Phase 2 to allow restaurants to re-open and get people out of their houses.

“The outdoor dining and partial indoor dining have gone very well,” said Auer. “Agawam’s restaurant operators really rose to the occasion. Now that the hot weather is here, the outdoor option is not as popular. To continue with outdoor dining past the November 1 date, an establishment would need to apply for a Special Permit and go through that process.”

While Gov. Baker has had numerous briefings, Auer said there is a message she would like to get across the to the public.

“You may think that you are safe among friends or small groups,” said Auer. “But think about how many other people your friends have had contact with in the last few days. Also be kind and be patient. Don’t be rude to store workers (or town workers) when they are only trying to do their job. We are all in this together, learning as we go along. It is out civic duty to follow the mandates so we can all look forward to getting back to any sense of normalcy.”

Auer will talk about the challenges she has faced during the pandemic in next week’s edition.

Virtual walk to help NAMI

AGAWAM – The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Western Massachusetts will be holding its 20th Annual Walkathon Virtual Celebration, ‘A Journey of Hope and Recovery’ on Aug. 23, starting at 11 a.m.

The event is suitable for all ages and abilities and will directly benefit NAMI Western Massachusetts continuing efforts to help improve the lives of those individuals living with mental health conditions and their families.

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation’s largest grassroots mental health organization. NAMI provides advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can

Build Better Lives.

Folks may help NAMI-WM’s mission by participating in this Virtual Walk or by sponsoring the event. Anyone who would like to submit a brief video saying how NAMI-WM has helped them or a loved one or how they maintain good mental health during these difficult times, these would be most appreciated. Videos should be two minutes or less, and the deadline is Aug.7. All entries should be emailed to information@namiwm.org.

For further information, contact NAMI’s office at 413-786-9139 or visit www.namiwm.org/events for entry and sponsorship forms.

\$8.7 million in federal funding given to Holyoke Medical Center

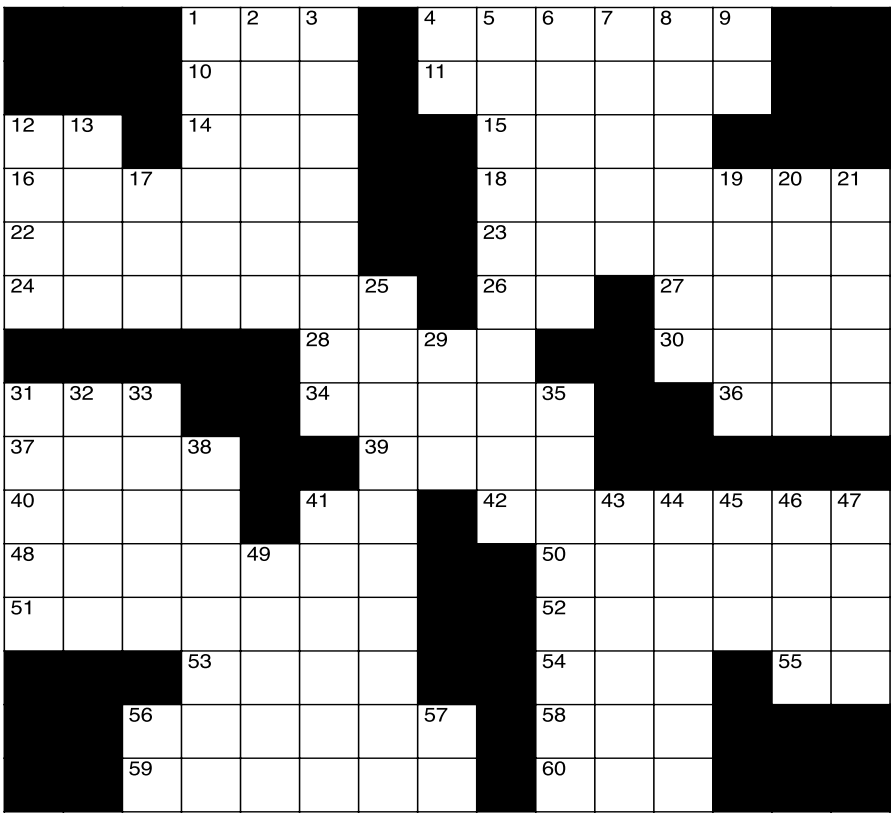
HOLYOKE – Over the weekend, Congressman Richard E. Neal, Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means joined President and CEO of Holyoke Medical Center Spiros Haritas for the announcement of \$8,700,000 in federal funding to the hospital.

“This money is a lifeline for providers who are caring for the COVID patients and others in the community who need quality health care, and Holyoke Medical Center is one of the best,” said Congressman Neal. “The COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost a health crisis. This funding will help support patients, providers, and frontline health workers. Holyoke also stepped up and took on patients from the Holyoke Soldiers Home when it was overwhelmed with COVID-related infections. Thanks to their help, many veterans received the care they needed during a troubling time.”

“Holyoke Medical Center, like other Massachusetts hospitals, has suffered significant financial losses in the fight

against the pandemic,” said Haritas. “For a small stand-alone community hospital, the impact of the additional costs and the loss of revenue can mean financial ruin. Chairman Neal has tirelessly advocated for all hospitals, and very specifically for the most vulnerable hospitals, like Holyoke Medical Center. We are extremely grateful for the advocacy and the financial relief we received. This funding directly helps our nurses, doctors and frontline staff because it secures PPE, equipment and resources for the ongoing fight against the pandemic. We know that the Chairman will continue to keep a watchful eye on Massachusetts hospitals as this pandemic unfolds. We are confident he will do everything in his power to continue the much-needed support.”

This funding was made possible through the Department of Health and Human Services Provider Relief Fund’s second round of high impact COVID-19 area funding to hospitals.



- CLUES ACROSS**
 - Central processing unit
 - Military action
 - How electricity gets to train carriages (abbr.)
 - Unsafe
 - Of (French)
 - Autonomic nervous system
 - Type of bean
 - Accuse formally of a crime
 - Promote
 - Type of lava
 - Meat from a deer
 - Herbaceous plants
 - Potato state
 - Helsinki neighborhood
 - Sports officials
 - Shout wildly
- Reptile genus
 - Frocks
 - Born of
 - N. Scandinavian indigenous people
 - Poultry cage
 - Aquatic insect genus
 - Of I
 - Ad ___: tirelessly repetitive
 - Item
 - Produce
 - Seedless raisin
 - Bond in a third party's control
 - Legendary character ___ Finn
 - Space station
 - Note at the end of a letter
 - In a way, contradicted
- Midway between northeast and east
 - Bears important traffic
 - Brooklyn hoopster
- CLUES DOWN**
 - Presides
 - Artist's tool
 - On a higher floor
 - Commercial
 - Something to watch
 - Chased
 - Commercial producers
 - Keyboard instrument
 - Blue grass state
 - Phonograph recording
 - Unusual
 - Popular average
 - A native or inhabitant of Asia
 - N. Sweden river
 - Related on the mother's side
 - Mediator
 - Partner of to
 - Arm bones
 - Korean seafood dish
 - Tap of the foot
 - Astronauts
 - Carolina footballer
 - Indiana city
 - Of or relating to bears
 - Not widely known
 - Body part
 - At the peak
 - High-pitched cries of a cat
 - A way to intimidate
 - Prosecutor
 - Atomic #66

SPORTS

FALL SPORTS

Fall high school sports delayed through September

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

REGION – In what is a very ominous sign for the future of high school sports in the 2020-2021 school year, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association has postponed the beginning of fall sports to the middle of September.

Last Tuesday, a virtual meeting of the MIAA Board of Directors took place, with a unanimous vote in favor of moving the state

date of fall sports to Sept. 14. This means actual contests may not be played until the end of September. This could result in almost only a half season of action in fall sports, and some sports could still be cancelled altogether.

The state and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is planning to issue additional guidance in the coming month which could change how the MIAA approaches fall sports.

Currently, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is in Phase 3 of

its re-opening plan, but Phase 3 is to remain stalled until either an impactful treatment or a vaccine for COVID-19 is developed and available for the public at large, allowing life to seemingly return to normal.

In Phase 3, Gov. Charlie Baker and his administration have labeled soccer, football, and basketball as sports that are “high-risk” and involve too much close contact. Effectively, while practices can occur, all contests of those three sports are banned current-

ly. The guidance specifically bans the sports at the recreational and “amateur” level, but does not specifically ban them at the high school level.

Part of the rationale in delaying the start of fall sports is for the DESE to wrap its head around the actual opening of school, and to determine whether or not learning will take place online, in-school, or hybrid of the two. Once that is determined, the MIAA will have to figure out how athletic practices and contests will work

in a situation like that, including determining eligibility for students “attending school” and dealing with transportation.

The MIAA has a COVID-19 Task Force that is working with the state government and collecting guidance and information regularly. It was the task force that made the Sept. 14 recommendation to the MIAA BOD.

The season was originally supposed to start on Aug. 21.

Other concepts that have been

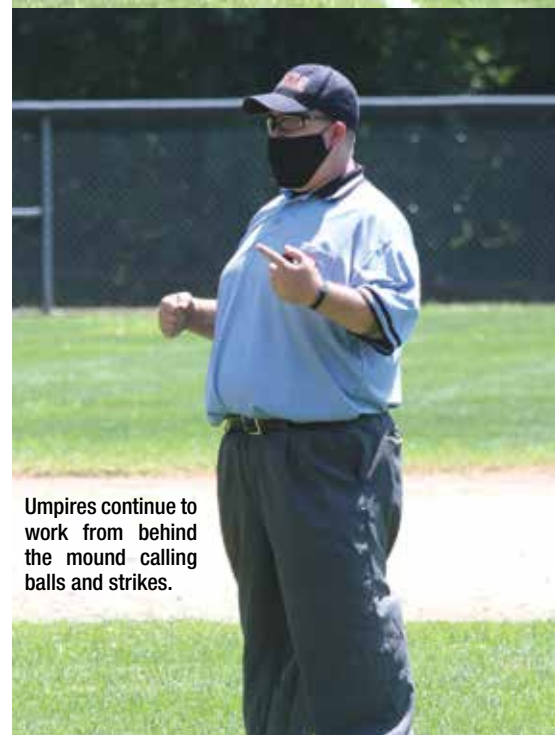
FALL SPORTS | page 8

BASEBALL



High school baseball action continues

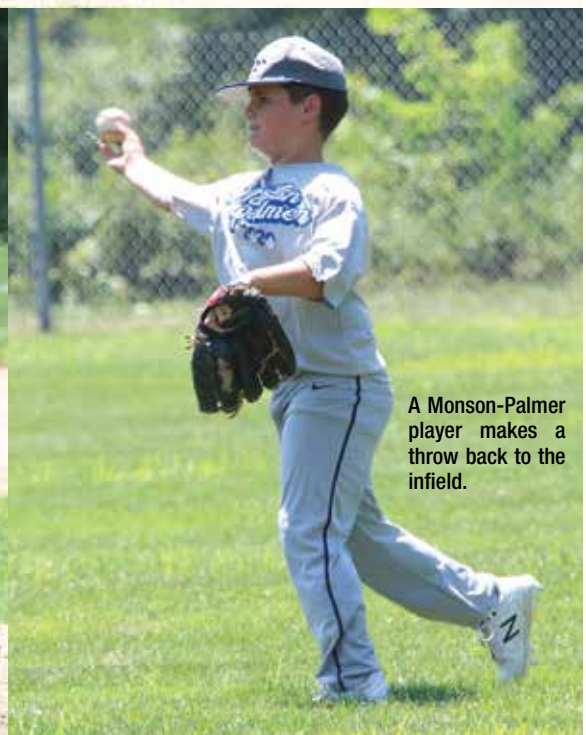
Baseball action will continue through August in the high school league.



Umpires continue to work from behind the mound calling balls and strikes.



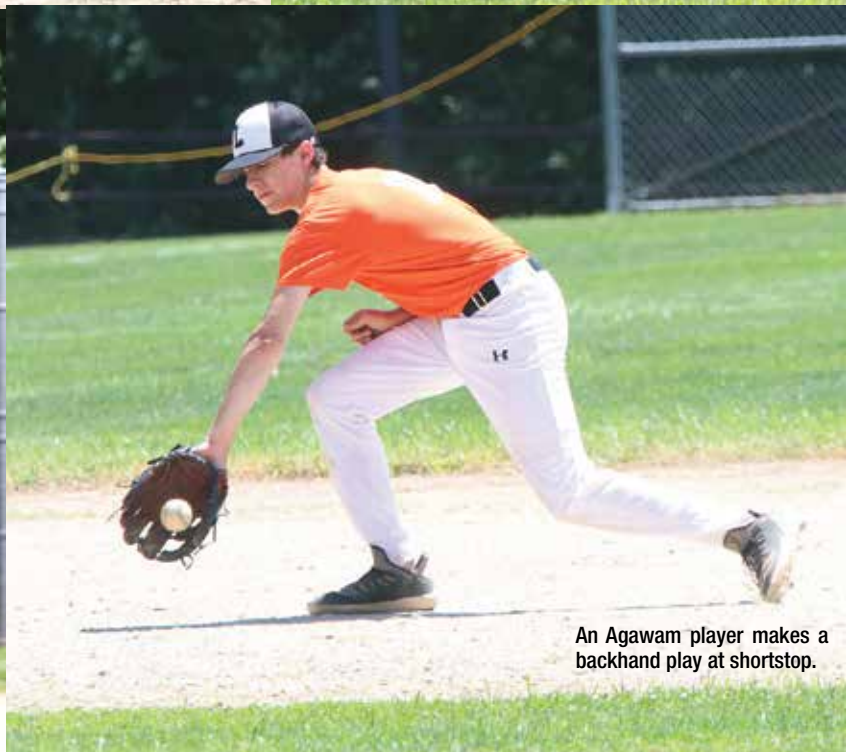
Baseball was played in Monson, Greenfield, and other locations on a bright Sunday afternoon.



A Monson-Palmer player makes a throw back to the infield.



Baseball has continued this summer as high-school-age players have formed their own junior and senior “Legion teams. PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



An Agawam player makes a backhand play at shortstop.

Sports

Fellows picks up another win at Monadnock

WINCHESTER, N.H. – Modified ace Ben Byrne earned his second victory lap of the summer Saturday, July 25, topping the 40-lap main event on the high banks of Monadnock Speedway.

Aaron Fellows stayed undefeated this season, winning a thriller in the Late Model Sportsmen, while the Curtis twins, Chase and Jaret, finished one-two in the Street Stocks to increase their standings atop the points parade.

Gordon Farnum topped the Mini Stocks for the third time this summer, and Pure Stock kingpin Chris Davis put a string of recent misfortunes behind him, romping to victory Friday. Short track legend Randy Cabral won the 30-lap NEMA Midget feature, with Avery Stohr victorious in the NEMA Lites.

Defending Sportsman Modified champion Todd Patnode and Keith Carzello led the 18-car NHSTRA field to the green, with Patnode – fresh off nightmare outings in each of the previous two weeks – set on reversing his fortunes.

To that end, the Swanzezy hot shoe set a torrid pace for the first 13 go-rounds. Brian Chapin took the lead on lap 14 and, the next time around, Patnode pitted under green, moving Byrne up to second, with points leader and previous week's winner Brian Robie in close tow.

Byrne was relentless over the next 18 circuits, finally taking the lead from the top lane on lap 32, with Chapin then bobbling on a restart to move Robie up to second, from where he would add to his points lead, earning valuable breathing room ahead of Trevor Bleau, who finished 15th on the night.

A week earlier, Aaron Fellows kept his undefeated season intact by passing Cole Littlewood with only two laps to go en route to Late Model Sportsman victory lane. Friday, he again passed Littlewood late in the game, this time on turn three of the final lap to add more luster to his un-

blemished record.

Littlewood, third a week earlier, held on for second Friday, with Robert Hagar coming home third. Willie Kuhn and Justin Littlewood completed the top five.

Hillary Renaud, gunning for two in a row in the sizzling Streets, led the first 14 circuits of her 25-lapper but then blinked, quickly finding herself back in forth as the flying Curtis twins, Chase and Jaret, stormed past, bringing Tommy O'Sullivan with them.

It was Chase Curtis first under the checkers, with his points-leading sibling Jaret riding in his shadow. Renaud's fourth-place run moved her up to fifth in points. Friday's victory was Chase Curtis's second of the summer, with both his father Chris and brother Jaret also having topped Street Stock features.

It took Gordon Farnum eight laps to come from row three to the point in the Mini Stock feature but, once there, he checked out on the field to score his third win of the summer. Kevin Clayton, strong all night, came home second, just ahead of Mark Panaroni.

Pure Stock powerhouse Chris Davis shook the late-race bugaboos that had plagued him in recent weeks Friday, taking control on lap two and then checking out. While Davis made it look easy, a tight battle raged behind him, with Mike Douglas emerging strong to cop the runner-up honors, just in front of Claremont regular Dylan Adams, who made his high-banks debut successful in third.

In the night's Iron Mike Memorial NEMA Midget main event, open-wheel legend Randy Cabral did what he's done at least once over the last 20 years. Cabral blasted to victory in the caution-free 30-lapper, taking the checkers ahead of Todd Bertrand and early-race leader Paul Scally. Avery Stohr topped the Lites 30-lapper.

Next Saturday, August 1, the Granite State Pro Stock Series will return to the



Aaron Fellows was a winner in the late-model sportsman race.

Winchester high banks, where they'll battle in a 100-lap main event. For more information, please visit www.monadnockspeedway.com.

MONADNOCK SPEEDWAY JULY 25 TOP TENS:

SPORTSMAN MODIFIED: Ben Byrne, Brian Robie, Brian Chapin, Keith Carzello, Russ Hersey, Solomon Brow, Cory Plummer, Cameron Houle, Andy Major, Jerry Gomarolo.

PURE STOCK: Chris Davis, Mike Douglas, Dylan Adams, Brandon Lavoie, Nick Houle, Doug Nelson, Cory Lofland, J.D. Stockwell, Reagan Buffum, Jimmy Zellman.

MINI STOCK: Gordon Farnum, Kevin Clayton, Mark Panaroni, Nathan Wenzel, Bill Chaffee, Kevin McKnight, Jake Puchalski, Jared Roy, Jeff Asselin.

STREET STOCK: Chase Curtis, Jaret Curtis, Tommy

O'Sullivan, Hillary Renaud, Mike Hopkins, Chris Buffone, Mike Radzuik, Kyle Gero, Paul Barnard, Tim Wenzel.

LATE MODEL SPORTSMAN: Aaron Fellows, Cole Littlewood, Robert Hagar, Willie Kuhn, Justin Littlewood, Ron Laperche, James Beck, Nancy Muni Ruot, Billy McCarthy, Camdyn Curtis.

NEMA MIDGETS (Top 3): Randy Cabral, Todd Bertrand, Paul Scally.

NEMA LITES (Top 3): Avery Stohr, Ryan Locke, P.J. Stergios.



Ben Byrne was a winner again in the sportsman modified race. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

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Sports

Hirschman takes win at Star Speedway

EPPING, N.H. — Matt Hirschman wasn't about to be denied. The Pennsylvania native, who is no stranger to Victory Lane on the Tri Track Open Modified Series circuit, returned to glory on Saturday night at Star Speedway in the ninth annual SBM race.

But the ride to victory wasn't one that came without difficulty, especially at the end. Hirschman dominated the beginning, taking the lead on lap 25 and leading through lap 83, before a controlled caution slowed the race. While some elected to stay out, Hirschman worked to pit road for a fresh Hoosier tire, the charge started back to the front from ninth position. He would eventually pass Matt Swanson for the top spot on a restart at lap 112 and never look back.

It was the fifth win in the prestigious event for Hirschman, who is one of just two drivers to com-

pete in all previous SBM races. The race was 121 laps, in honor of track owner and operator Bobby Webber's son Tim Webber, who turned 21-years-old the week of the race.

The purse for the event was over \$40,000, a figure that didn't change post-COVID pandemic. Due to COVID-19, and guidance from the state of New Hampshire, Star Speedway ran at 50% capacity for the event in the grandstands, and sold out. Tri Track and Star officials made sure that all social distancing and safe health practices were in place.

"I've always enjoyed coming here, winning the first time I have ever came here, and having all of this success I've had in this SBM race after that," Hirschman said. "Going back to the original races, it was, and has been, a big deal for us."

Swanson, who started 27th after earning a provisional into

the race, played a different strategy than Hirschman did, and it almost paid off. Swanson elected not to pit as part of the controlled caution period on lap 83, and took over the lead when most others went down pit road. Swanson led the race from lap 83-112, before Hirschman took control when Swanson spun his tires on the restart.

Swanson would finish second, while Andy Jankowiak, who played a similar strategy and stayed out, finished third. Jankowiak was involved in a wreck on lap 25 with veteran Dave Sapienza, but was able to rebound.

Ronnie Williams started third and finished fourth, and Eric Goodale made his return to the Tri Track Series and rounded out the top five. NASCAR Cup Series regular Ryan Preece was sixth in his return to Modified racing, while Anthony Nocella, Austin Kochenash, Cam McDermott

and Ron Silk finished the top-10.

Earlier in the day, Ron Silk, Matt Hirschman, Andy Shaw and Andy Jankowiak won heat races, while Anthony Nocella and Calvin Carroll earned consi wins. Both heat and consi winners collected \$300 courtesy of the Pepsi Challenge.

Swanson, who passed 25 Modifieds en route to the front, earned a \$500 hard charger bonus courtesy of Green Construction. Since pole sitter Austin Kochenash didn't win the race, courtesy of Superior Refinishing, the next race on the circuit will pay a \$600 bonus if the pole sitter wins the race.

The Tri Track Open Modified Series returns to the track on Saturday, August 15, with the second stop of the season at Monadnock Speedway.

RESULTS: Tri Track Open Modified Series; Star Speedway; July 25:

- 1. Matt Hirschman
- 2. Matt Swanson
- 3. Andy Jankowiak
- 4. Ronnie Williams
- 5. Eric Goodale
- 6. Ryan Preece
- 7. Anthony Nocella
- 8. Austin Kochenash
- 9. Cam McDermott
- 10. Ron Silk
- 11. Calvin Carroll
- 12. Kurt Vigeant
- 13. Kirk Alexander
- 14. Craig Lutz
- 15. Bryan Narducci
- 16. Devin O'Connell
- 17. Andy Shaw
- 18. Les Rose Jr.
- 19. Dylan Izzo
- 20. Tommy Barrett
- 21. Dave Sapienza
- 22. Richard Savary
- 23. Ryan Doucette
- 24. Les Hinckley
- 25. Carl Medeiros Jr.
- 26. Dana DiMatteo
- 27. Josh Cantara

Baseball clinics to take place in August

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Parks and Recreation Department in conjunction with the John Murphy Youth Baseball League will be conducting baseball clinics. To sign up for the clinic, please contact Coach Terry Murphy at tmurphy1hcc@comcast.net.

Clinics will follow all of the board of health requirements regarding masks, spacing and cleaning of equipment. Players with their own bats and helmets or catcher's gear are encouraged to bring to the clinic.

Potential Baseball Clinics Schedule

All clinics to take place at Mackenzie Field

Free of charge for Holyoke residents, \$10 for non-residents

Wednesday, August 5
5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (Age group

7-10)
Thursday, August 6 5 : 4 5
p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (Age group 14-17)
Monday, August 10 1 0
a.m. to 12 noon (age group 11-13)
Wednesday, August 12 1 0
a.m. – 12 noon (age group 7-10)
Wednesday, August 12
5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (age group 14-17)
Thursday, August 13
5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (age group 11-13)
Monday, August 17 1 0
a.m. – 12 noon (age group 7-10)
Wednesday, August 19
10 a.m. – 12 noon (age group 11-13)
Wednesday, August 19
5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (age group 14-17)
Thursday, August 20
5:45 p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (age group

7-10)
Wednesday, August 26
10 a.m. – 12 noon (age group 14-17)
Wednesday, August 26 5 : 4 5
p.m. - 7:45 p.m. (age group 11-13)
Clinics will be run by former Holyoke Community College baseball coach Terry Murphy. He will be assisted by Bob Prattico, former Holyoke Catholic coach, Mike Afflitto, Smith Academy coach, and Mike Prattico, Amherst High School coach. Added to the coaching staff is Dioni Soriano Bello, a former player in Japan and Latin America. They will also be assisted by several former high school players as well. A trainer will also be on hand for each session!

Racing to resume in Thompson

THOMPSON, Conn. – Econn Motorsports and Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park announced this week an agreement that will enable oval track racing to continue on the famed 5/8th mile at Thompson, CT.

Plans currently call for Econn Motorsports to also host an open practice on Wednesday, August 5. Racing is set to resume with the Bud 150 on Wednesday August 19 and the Sunoco World Series on October 9-11. The NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour is expected to headline both race dates. The parties are exploring the possibility of additional race meets during 2020.

Econn Motorsports is a newly formed race promotion and

consulting firm headed by Terry Eames, former General Manager of Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park. "The COVID-19 pandemic put oval track racing at Thompson in 2020 at risk. We are proud to announce that the Hoenig family and Econn have found a way for oval track racing to continue during the track's 80th year and beyond", Eames said.

Specific details of next week's practice will be available over the next several days at EconnMotorsports.com. Tickets will only be available online and in advance in keeping with the policies set forth by the State of Connecticut designed to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Pinehurst Resort to host 2020 High School Golf National Invitational

BOSTON – Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina will host both the Boys and Girls 2020 High School Golf National Invitational, August 3-5. Participants will come from more than 40 states—more than 110 girls and 250 boys—to compete in a three-round, 54-hole, stroke-play format.

The High School Golf National Invitational showcases golf at the highest level, bringing together the strongest and most diverse field in high school golf from large, small, public and private high school programs across the United States. It was first played in 2019, with 300 boys and girls

representing 43 states. Competitors include State Championship winning boys and girls players; the nation's best high school golf teams; and top individuals from each state. With the loss of the spring 2020 high school golf season, this event is even more important to showcase the most talented high school golfers from across America.

The Boys and Girls National Invitational will be played on Pinehurst's No. 6, No. 8 and No. 9 courses, and include team and individual competitions. Pinehurst Resort is steeped in tradition and has hosted some of golf's greatest

events, including the PGA Championship, Ryder Cup, U.S. Open, Women's U.S. Open and U.S. Amateur.

"It's really incredible to bring the 2020 High School Golf National Invitational to Pinehurst Resort, where the players can experience one of the best golf facilities in the world," said NHSGA Manager Chris Noble. "This event is the pinnacle of high school golf and valuable to college coaches seeking hidden talent they may not see on the junior golf circuit otherwise, especially during an unprecedented year like this."

Last year, the Girls Invitation-

al went down to the wire, with a two-hole playoff for the top high school teams, after South Carolina and California totaled two-day team scores of 584. The four-on-four aggregate team playoff was won with a birdie on the final hole by tournament medalist Kamille Dimayuga (Buena Park, Calif.), who shot consecutive rounds of 71, to finish with a 2-under par, 142 total.

Virginia won the 2019 Boys Division team title with a two-day score of 581 (291-290). Second place went to Arkansas (592), followed by Pennsylvania (598) in third. Aidan Thomas from Ber-

nalillo, N.M., fired a career-best round 65 on day one of the tournament; and followed with a 70 on day two, to win the individual medalist title with a 9-under par, 135 total.

The High School Golf National Invitational is conducted by the National High School Golf Association (NHSGA), a division of Next-gengolf, which was acquired by the PGA of America in 2019. The Invitational is supported by several partners, including the PGA of America, AJGA, Srixon, Gatorade and Junior Golf Hub.

Relics return to action after long hiatus

LUDLOW – The Western Mass Relics, which is a summer/fall Senior Softball recreational slow pitch League has resumed play last week. The Relics field two divisions: the silver division is comprised of men 50-64 years of age and the bronze division is men 65 and over.

For the more competitive player there is opportunity to join a travel team and participate in local, regional and national tour-

naments.

Teams in both divisions normally play two games a week in the evenings, with all games played at the Fish & Game Club in Ludlow. These weekly games emphasize fun, friendship and good sportsmanship.

This year due to the coronavirus all players have to wear masks in the field except the outfielders. The players temperatures are taken before they enter the field. If

a player has a temperature, the player must leave the field and return home. Players must bring a lawn chair so they can social distance when a team is batting. The Relics have dispensed with hand shaking, fist bumps and any other contact with players.

For further information or to join the league contact Steve Lepow at 860-885-4556 or Ted Chmura at 413-589-1965.

explored was the possibility of playing baseball and softball in fall season and moving soccer and football to spring. The idea was turned down in the early stages out of risk that a baseball or softball player could "lose two seasons."

The board also unanimously passed a recommendation to suspend the end-of-game handshakes until further notice to reduce contact between teams.

Currently, only high school-age baseball and some softball tournaments are being played in Massachusetts with sanitization and social distancing being adhered to.

Among sports that could be played in the fall currently are volleyball, cross country, field hockey, and golf. It is not yet known if high school students will be allowed to play football or soccer this fall.

Public Notices

AGAWAM PLANNING BOARD
The Agawam Planning Board will hold a **remote public hearing** due to the COVID19 pandemic on **Thursday, August 6, 2020 at 6:00 PM online via Zoom**. The purpose of this hearing will be to hear the Definitive Plan application of **Hillside Development Corp. for property known as 173 Southwick Street**. Interested parties can contact the Planning Board at pkerr@agawam.ma.us for more information, to provide written comments prior to the meeting or attend via the following:
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Webinar ID: 972 4318 7943
By Order of
Mark R. Paleologopoulos, Chairman
Agawam Planning Board
07/23, 07/30/20

AGAWAM PLANNING BOARD
The Agawam Planning Board will hold a **remote public hearing** due to the COVID19 pandemic on **Thursday, August 6, 2020 at 6:30 PM online via Zoom**. The purpose of this hearing will be to hear the Definitive Plan application of **Aspenwood Associates LLC**

for property at 673 Silver Street. Interested parties can contact the Planning Board at pkerr@agawam.ma.us for more information, to provide written comments prior to the meeting or attend via the following:
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Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.

WOODS ■ from page 4

we returned to our campsite all of the dead branches in the area had been thoroughly soaked. None of us had thought to gather any beforehand, even though we knew it might rain. However, we hadn't really eaten yet that day, since going hungry is admittedly a part of the experience, so the pouring rain wasn't going to stop us.

My friend Helen prepared three bowls of burger meat, pre-made mashed potatoes, and frozen corn. My other friend CJ gathered as much make-shift kindling from Helen's car as there was to be found. My job was to hold the light and umbrella to protect the firepit from the rain as much as possible. We burned the paper bag that had held our groceries, Helen's old receipts, the entire issue of the Green Mountain Daily, and lime-flavored Tostitos chips. The fire would flame up and engulf the bowls whenever CJ would put another piece of scrap into the pit, only for it to burn up entirely a minute later and leave us cold again. Helen tried to stir the meat to ensure that the burger was at least cooked enough to not get us sick. Smoke billowed into our faces, choking us and burning our eyes. We had to shift in a circle around the pit to move with the tiny flame we were barely maintaining. Ash fell into our meat, and bugs kept trying to drown themselves in our mashed potato pool. At one point, the bowl of corn caught on fire. Ultimately, our Shepherd's Pie took about forty minutes to cook properly, and we realized as we put the ingredients together that we'd bought too much meat and not enough mashed potatoes. We brought our dinner into our dark tent (because we'd also forgotten our lantern) and ate around the light of a tiny citronella candle (which is dangerous, by the way). Against all odds, the Shepherd's Pie tasted delicious.

Is there anyone reading this that doesn't have stories of their own misadventures in the woods? I doubt it. Bored teenagers and the woods go together like salt and pepper. While Robinson State Park might not have the range or the peaks of the Green Mountains, it has a comparable charm and mystique. One such mystery of the woods unfolded around Christmas of 1976.

If you dig deep enough into the bowels of the Google search results for "Agawam," you'll stumble across a quirky website called "bigfootencounters.com" that chronicles accounts of Bigfoot sightings from around the United States. Two archived newspaper articles about OUR little town live on this website.

"BIGFOOT ELUDES TEAM ON OVERNIGHT CAMPOUT" What a headline! In the days prior to December 31st, 1976, 27-inch footprints left by a five-toed creature had been discovered by locals along the Westfield River. Massachusetts isn't famous for its Sasquatch population, but reported sightings of a massive bipedal ape creature wandering around the Berkshires date back to at least 1765 and continue into the present day. There are a few squadrons of Bigfoot hunters in Massachusetts, and one such team paid a visit to Agawam following the discovery

of these massive footprints.

Enter Lee Frank. I'd be surprised if you were familiar with that name, so here's a short biography for the uninitiated. Lee Frank was (or is) a Bigfoot tracker and Loch Ness Monster hunter. He was (is) from the Midwest, but spent the 1970's traveling the United States in search of Sasquatch. He claimed (claims) to have a hair sample from the Sasquatch, but its authenticity has never been proven. He believed (believes) that Bigfoot may be related to aliens, an idea he got from a New Hampshire woman named Betty Hill who believed she and her husband had been abducted by extraterrestrials in 1961. As far as public records go, the Agawam investigation was one of Lee Frank's last before he fell off of the face of the map. Lee Frank's current whereabouts are unknown.

Lee Frank was called into town by Marianna Cascio of Agawam, who believed in the authenticity of the prints. Frank and his team camped out beside the trail of footprints in temperatures that dipped below zero, waiting and watching for the "missing link." When that stakeout didn't bear any fruit, they optimistically returned for another night of camping in Robinson. The Agawam Police Department did invest a bit of their time looking into the prints, but the investigation was mostly propelled by this team of trackers as well as dozens of interested Agawam residents. A New York investigator went on record to say that he felt confident that the prints were authentic.

January 6th, 1977. "BIGFOOT SORRY ABOUT STEP-PING ON LAW." After two weeks, the "Sasquatch" was found: David Deschenes, 16, human being. Bored teenagers and the woods-- what did I tell you? Here's what really happened: over the course of two days while Deschenes was on break from school, he handcrafted two gigantic feet from 28-inch-long plywood boards. When he was done, he bundled up, strapped the boards to the bottoms of his shoes, and took a lovely evening stroll along the Westfield River. "I did it as a joke for the little kids around here, but it got out of hand," Deschenes told reporters in 1977. "The next thing I knew the police were out at two in the morning looking around, taking it seriously. I didn't feel like going out to tell them I was 'bigfoot.'"

In 2001, this tiny incident would be recorded on big-footencounters.com, a website that itself lifted the story from another website called Creature Chronicles that was curated by an Ohioan paranormal investigator named Ron Schaffner. Deschenes's prank is now memorialized forever on this obscure corner of the internet, where only a couple times every decade or so some curious cat like me stumbles upon it. It's funny how, despite the Earth's vastness, it's still somehow small enough to enable worlds to collide like that.

I wasn't able to find David Deschenes on the web, but in the article he said that he hoped he'd be able to get his big feet-planks back from the cops so that he could have them mounted. On behalf of bored teenagers everywhere, I hope he still has them.

Lesser files bill to review state's COVID-19 response

BOSTON – State Sen. Eric Lesser (D-Longmeadow) and Rep. Jon Santiago (D-Boston) recently filed "An Act establishing the Commission of Inquiry on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Response to and Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis." The legislation would task a commission with reviewing the state's response to the novel coronavirus outbreak and make recommendations on how Massachusetts can better prepare in the future.

Lesser serves as Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies as well as a member of the Senate's COVID-19 task force. Santiago is a member of the Joint Committee on Public Health as well as an emergency room physician at Boston Medical Center.

"As we gain more insight into the spread of the Coronavirus outbreak and its impacts on Massachusetts, it is vital that we establish a dedicated nonpartisan commission to evaluate the response to the crisis and ensure future preparedness," Lesser said. "The unprecedented nature of COVID-19 has upended our way of life and has revealed pre-existing inequities in our system that needs to be evaluated and improved upon, especially as the threat of resurgence lingers."

The seven-member Commission must have expertise in professions such as economics; labor and workforce development; business and finance; public health; medicine, including epidemiology; health care; civil rights; law and governmental service; and emergency preparedness. The Commission must be nonpartisan and cannot include a current elected official, an employee of state or local government, a registered lobbyist, or an employee of a trade association or special interest group. The chair of the Commission will be appointed by a majority vote of the members. The Commission will be required to hold public hearings and be given subpoena power to compel witnesses and produce documents during their investigation.

The legislation requires the Commission to file a report of its findings, analysis and recommendations six months after enactment and requires the Commission to convene its first meeting no more than 45 days following the enactment of the legislation.

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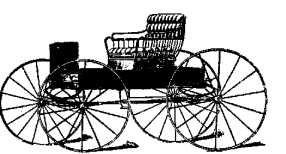
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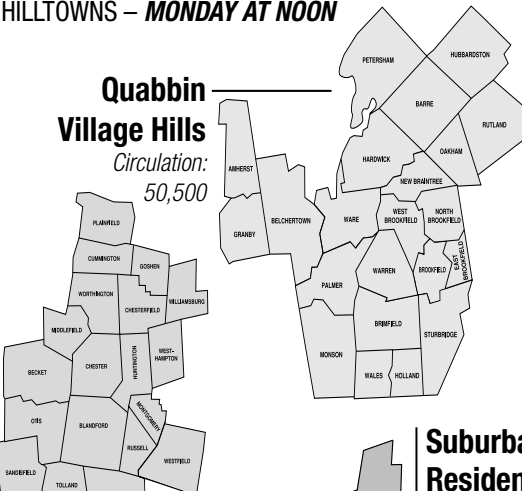
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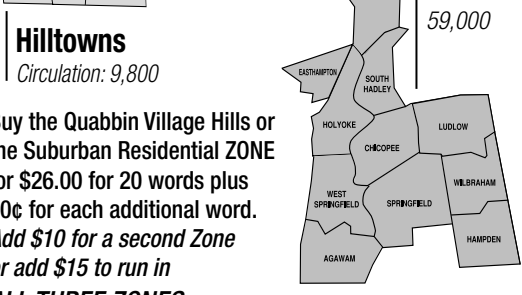
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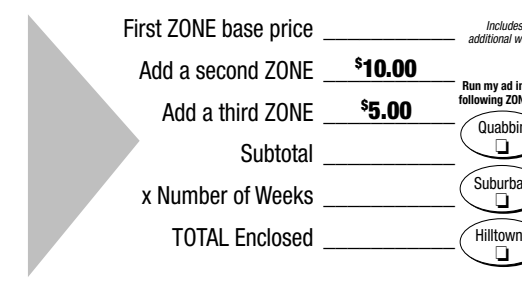
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Columbia Gas of Massachusetts delivers natural gas to nearly 325,000 customers through an underground pipeline network of nearly 5,000 miles of gas mains and more than 260,000 gas services. While the largest single cause of pipeline failures is the result of homeowners and professional excavators damaging underground lines, natural gas leaks can also cause harm. Gas leaks may be caused by loose fittings, appliance connections, material failure, accidental damage or corrosion.

It is important to look, listen and smell to detect natural gas leaks and then take action.

The utility advises folks to watch for bubbling water or dirt blowing the ground near a natural gas line, as that may indicate the release of gas from an underground pipeline. If folks hear hissing, blowing or roaring sounds, such noises may be a sign of a safety hazard as well. Due to the odorless and colorless nature of natural gas, Columbia Gas adds Mercaptan, which smells like rotten eggs. The presence of this odor is another warning sign of a potential hazard.

Those who smell "rotten eggs" or detect a natural gas leak are advised to immediately leave the area. When safely away from the location, dial 911 and Columbia Gas of Massachusetts at 800-525-8222.

Additionally, folks should warn others to avoid the area, leave doors and windows in their present condition and avoid using anything that could cause ignition, including lighters, cellphones and electrical switches. Folks should not operate pipeline valves or attempt to correct leaks themselves.

"At Columbia Gas of Massachusetts, providing safe reliable natural gas service is our top priority," said Martin Poulin, vice president and general manager. "Any person who smells 'rotten egg' or detects a potential leak should immediately leave the area and then call 911 and the gas company. By taking these steps we can keep Massachusetts a safe place to live and work."

To learn more about natural gas safety, visit www.ColumbiaGasMA.com.

Women's group appoints new leadership

REGION – The Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls has elected new leadership, Gabrielle Jackson, a Springfield resident and Educator, has been elected as HCCSWG Chair. Jackson was first appointed to the Commission in January of 2020 and serves alongside nine fellow Commissioners. Jackson is excited to serve and continue to support, collaborate and advocate on behalf of women and girls across Hampden County. In addition to being an Educator, Jackson is a dedicated mentor to youth in the community. As an Educator and School Administrator, she encourages students to aspire to great things such as public service in their community and to support their community with energy, enthusiasm and special gifts. Most of her students are at-risk, and encouraging them to reach their dreams, instilling confidence in themselves and their ability to make "good trouble" and achieve great things. She believes in our students, encouraging them to think beyond themselves; to see themselves as valued contributors to their academic and personal goals. Jackson is preceded by Commissioner Dawn DiStefano, who served as Chair for 2 years.

HCCSWG also elected Tara Marshall, a Feeding Hills resident and certified debt management professional, as Secretary. Marshall was also appointed in January, alongside Jackson and fellow Commissioner, Lizzy Ortiz of Springfield. Marshall has been working in the non-profit credit counseling industry for over twenty-one years. As one of the Customer Care managers at a non-profit credit counseling agency located in Agawam, she leads a dedicated team of representatives in a customer service call center that provides quality service to a nationwide client base of over 12,000 consumers. Marshall is preceded by Michelle Gonçalves. They serve alongside Vice Chair Patricia Hallberg of Wilbraham. Patricia is also the Chief Executive Officer of the Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts. Fellow Commissioners include Jennifer Metsch of Longmeadow and Shanique Spalding of Springfield. The Commission plans to continue to work on advocacy that amplifies and provides support of the needs of women and girls during and after the pandemic, through a series of virtual events and in partnership with local organizations.

The Hampden County Commission on the Status of



Gabrielle Jackson was appointed the new chair of the Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Women and Girls is a regional arm of the statewide Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission is an independent state agency that was legislatively created in 1998 to advance the women of the Commonwealth to full equality in all areas of life and to promote their rights and opportunities. HCCSWG serves as a permanent, effective voice for the women and girls of Massachusetts.

AIC names new trustees

SPRINGFIELD – American International College recently welcomed two members to the Board of Trustees, E. Thomas Foster and Denise R. Jordan.

Foster is the managing director of The Retirement Advisor University Speakers Bureau. A 1970 graduate of AIC, Foster also attended Suffolk University Law School. In a career spanning more than 30 years, he is well-regarded as an industry expert, educating and advising individuals and businesses on the retirement marketplace, including products, legislation, regulation, and compliance.

Most recently, Foster served as the spokesperson for MassMutual Retirement Services, working directly with

financial advisers and employers to educate about 401(k) and other qualified retirement savings plans.

Jordan was born and raised in the city of Springfield. She attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where she received a bachelor of science in political

Jordan worked for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in a variety of roles for more than 20 years. In 2008, she became the city of Springfield's first Black chief of staff, a position she held for more than a decade in the Office of Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno. Jordan currently serves as the executive director of the Springfield Housing Authority, the third largest public housing authority in the state.

NOTICE

ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

SCOUTS ■ from page 1

with the Pancake Breakfast, which was also cancelled due to safety restrictions, Longo explained that the money raised will help to buy scout equipment, summer camps, and other things needed during the year. These funds will be placed into an account for the next years activities. Over the past ten years the troop has averaged \$1,200 for the pancake breakfasts, though they would have lost out on this money without holding the drive.

The troop was able to collect about 40,000 returnables on that Saturday, though they also accumulated around 30,000 items in the weeks leading up to that Saturday of the Donation Drive Event. In total the Troop was able to collect 70,000 returnable and collected \$3,500 for next year's expenses. "The money raised goes towards a variety of expenses. The Troop will allocate funds for such things as troop camping gear, awards to recognize advancements that the scouts achieve, and Scout Handbooks," Longo said. "We also use funds for leadership training courses for youth and adults. A portion of the money raised will be used to offset costs associated with camping trips and other events including summer camp."

Longo said that the troop has set money aside in the past, to fund big events for the kids. Activities have included things like zip

lining, indoor skiing, or white-water rafting, so the scouts are thinking of activities they'd like to do for the upcoming year. The money raised from the event can certainly help this special event cost as well. Though the even was only one Saturday from 9 a.m.-12 p.m., the troop was conducting 'no contact' pickups for a few weeks before holding the event. The troop committee realized a few months ago that many people were accumulating bottles and cans because most of the redemption centers are still closed. They decided then to do the can and bottle drive, since the pancake breakfast and candy sales were canceled.

Apart from the donation event, people can help out the troop by making a tax-deductible donation to the troop. They hold activities including five-mile hikes and camping, though during the pandemic they have participated in Zoom meetings and many individual families participated in nationwide trash cleanup events where they picked up over 100 pounds of trash. The troop is looking forward to outdoor activities again, but they have recently started to have outdoor meetings while following all the appropriate safety measures and health prescreening. If anyone is interested in getting involved in Scouting or would like to make a donation, they can email the troop at troop82agawam@gmail.com.



From left; Karen Fillion, Kasey Fillion, Lucas Fillion, Joe Longo, Connor Dobies, Gina Yacovone-Barrett, Vincent Barrett, Bob Majewski, Noah Dion, Rob Muldrew, Anthony Koutroubila, Eric Muldrew, Dean Fleagle, and Sarah Dobies the parents and scouts of Troop 82. PHOTOS BY SHELBY MACRI



From left; Anthony Koutroubila, Noah Dion, Vincent Barrett, Eric Muldrew, Connor Dobies, Sarah Dobies, and Joe Longo continue to sort materials and collect materials from donors.



From left, Gina Yacovone-Barrett, Anthony Koutroubila, Noah Dion, and Vincent Barrett gather bags to help sort materials.

PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT

Mercadante Garner's Additional Endorsements

PAUL CAVALLO:

"It has been an honor to get to know Dino and his love for this community over the last 3 years. I have greatly enjoyed our conversations about how we can move forward to make this a better town to live, work and raise a family. Dino is a true ally for our community and I know, if he is elected State Representative, he will work tirelessly for our collective good. I hope you will join me in voting for Dino Mercadante for State Representative of Agawam, Southwick and Granville."

- Paul has worked for 30 years for the Agawam High School as counselor, educator and principal. He served on the Agawam School Committee for 2-terms and is presently in his 6th term on the Agawam City Council.



EARLY, IN-PERSON VOTING FOR THE SEPTEMBER 1ST REPUBLICAN PRIMARY WILL RUN FROM AUGUST 22ND THROUGH AUGUST 28TH.

GERALD SMITH:

"Dino Mercadante will make a great State Representative. I have worked with Dino as a City Councilor and have seen firsthand his ability as a legislator. Dino is dependable. He has never missed a Council of Sub-Committee meeting. Dino works tirelessly. He has always made himself available to his constituents. He listens, thinks and votes his conscience."

- Gerry is the former owner of the Agawam Auto School. He was an Agawam High school coach and teacher. Gerry has been inducted into the Massachusetts Coaches Hall of Fame, the Agawam High School Hall of Fame and the Agawam baseball field has been named in his honor. He is currently serving in his first term on the Agawam City Council.



I humbly ask for your support in the September 1st Republican Primary for State Representative of the Third Hampden District. I am eager to get to work for you!

"I'll fight for you everyday. Our district deserves its fair share."

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Dino Mercadante



DINO MERCADANTE
State Representative

A New Voice for Agawam, Southwick and Granville